

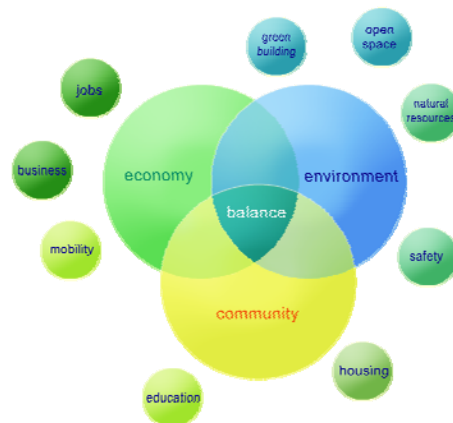
Zoning Ordinance Sustainability Audits

Assessing regulations that impact
land use planning can help a community's
"triple bottom line."



Sustainability is a process and a way of doing business that builds the local economy, supports the community, and preserves the environment for long-term viability. Because their responsibility is to balance today's demands with tomorrow's needs, local governments can be community leaders in sustainability. People often think of sustainability in terms of energy conservation and reducing greenhouse gases, yet communities should consider a broader perspective and evaluate how they address the **triple bottom line** of sustainability:

1. **Community** means people. A sustainable community has a variety of choices in housing, jobs, and transportation. A sustainable community is engaged, diverse, and participates in civic life.
2. **Economy** means prosperity. A sustainable economy offers employment, provides needed goods and services to the community, and exports those goods and services. A sustainable economy needs a quality workforce and a culture that supports entrepreneurial activities.
3. **Environment** means natural resources. A sustainable environment means clean air and water, as well as conservation and stewardship of natural resources. A sustainable environment allows and encourages recreation for today's generation while ensuring the same quality environment for tomorrow's generation.



Land use regulation is one key area in which local governmental policies can either enhance or impede the triple bottom line. A zoning ordinance sustainability audit assesses regulations that impact community land use planning. Such audits should highlight zoning regulations that negatively impact sustainability (e.g., excessive parking requirements that are costly to build/maintain and increase stormwater runoff) and recommend strategies for new regulations that promote sustainable efforts. Examples of some areas of focus include:

- o Alternative energy ordinances that allow conversion systems for the purpose of providing electricity to a residence, farm, business, institution, and/or industrial facility
- o Landscape standards that encourage low-maintenance/low-water plantings and native species
- o Provisions for home-based businesses, mixed uses, and infill/redevelopment standards that encourage entrepreneurship and a variety of economic development opportunities.
- o Storm water provisions that regulate management, impervious surfaces, development density, and open space.
- o Wellhead Protection Plans, including site plan review standards, that preserve a clean, reliable water supply while identifying steps to eliminate groundwater contamination.
- o Wetland and tree protection ordinances that preserve trees as important physical, aesthetic, recreational, and economic assets to existing and future residents
- o Other zoning regulations that promote placemaking, access management, and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) principles